

Waterways on Land



SERVICES WE USE 6

WATERWAYS ON LAND

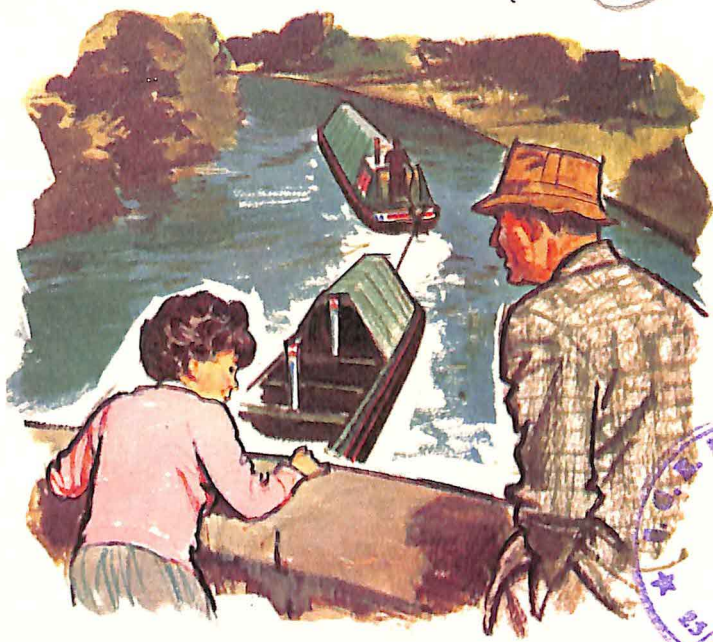
Jane and her uncle stood on the canal bridge. They leaned on the parapet and watched as a pair of "narrow-boats" slid through the water beneath them.

They were gaily painted, and had pictures of castles and roses on the cabin doors.

"Where are they going?" asked Jane.

"They are on their way from London to Birmingham," said her uncle.

2193



Jane was so interested that she made up her mind to find out all she could about canals.



25.7.05
11/11/05

There have been canals in the world for thousands of years. The Egyptians built one 2,000 years before Christ was born. About the same time, one was built in Iraq. The Romans built many canals in Europe, and the Chinese built one in 610 A.D.

Most of the canals in Britain were built between one and two hundred years ago. They were all dug by men using picks and shovels.

These men were called "navvies" because they were employed on "navigation" work.



Navigation is the skill used in travelling from one place to another by sea, river or canal.

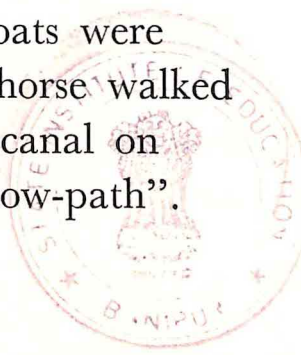
One of the first British canals was opened about two hundred years ago. It was built by James Brindley for the Duke of Bridgewater. On it, coal was carried to Manchester from the Duke's coal-mines at Worsley.

There were no railways then, and the roads were very bad. People who wanted to move goods from one town to another began to use the canals more and more.

About 150 years ago, many people travelled by canal. Night sleeping-boats sailed between Glasgow and Edinburgh.



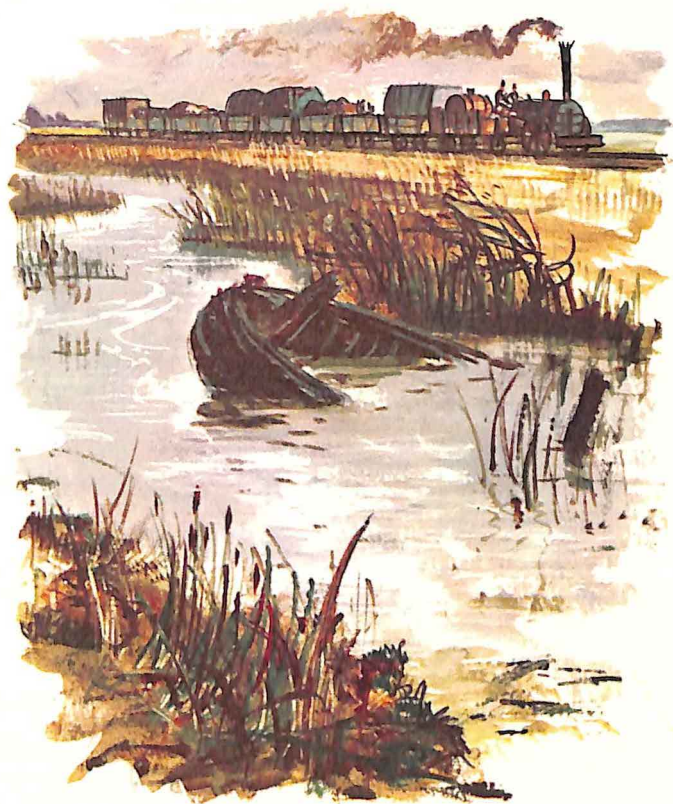
In those days, the boats were pulled by horses. The horse walked along the bank of the canal on what was called the “tow-path”.



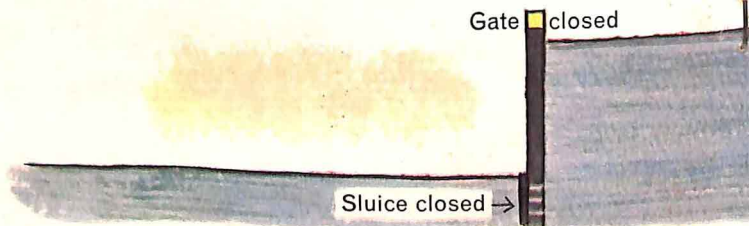
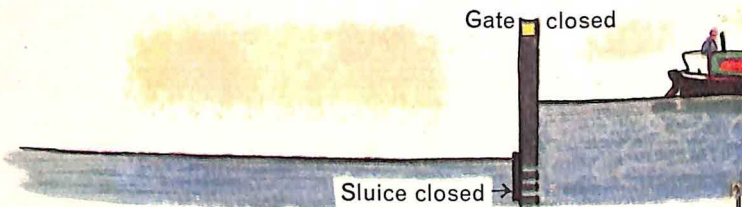
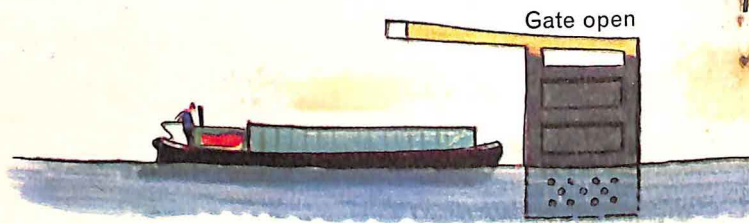
When the railways came, they took much of the trade from the canals because they were so much quicker.

Many canals fell into disuse and were abandoned. Weeds grew up and choked them. In some places the banks fell in. In others, the water escaped and the canal dried up.

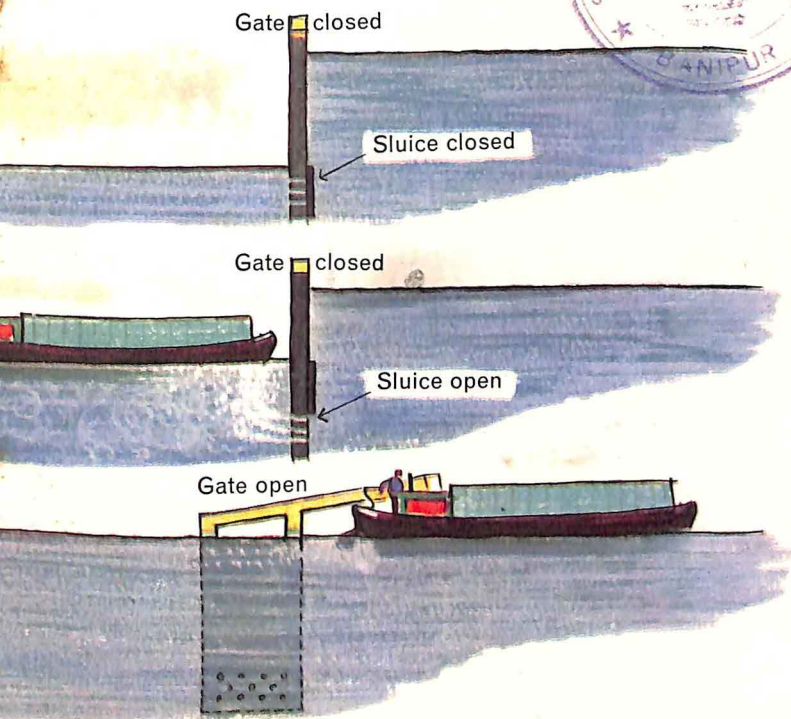
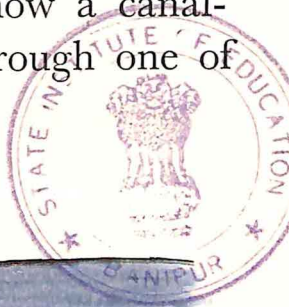
Those that were left changed over from horse-drawn boats to steam-barges. The poor boatmen could not afford a cottage on land, so they began to live in the boats and took their families with them. The boats became their only homes.



Canals are built over high ground and low ground. The level of water is controlled by locks.



These pictures show how a canal-boat goes up a step, through one of these locks.



Today, there are more than 2,000 miles of waterways in England, not counting the River Thames, the Bridgewater Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal. About 3,500 barges and narrow-boats use these canals.

Some canals are narrow. They take boats 7 feet wide. Each boat carries between 25 and 30 tons. Other canals are broad. They take big boats called barges. Barges can carry anything from 50 to 400 tons.

Canal boats carry timber, coal, iron, building material, oil, grain, cement and other goods.

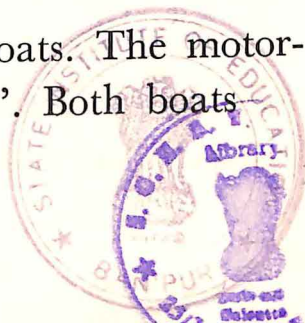


These are coal barges being towed.



These are narrow-boats. The motor-boat pulls the "butty". Both boats are loaded.

EVERETT, W. H. LIBRARY
 Date 25.7.05
 11645
 Ann. Ho.



One of the longest canals is the Grand Union Canal. It goes from London to Birmingham, and a branch goes off to Leicester and Nottingham. It links the factories of the midlands with the Port of London.

It starts at Regents Canal Dock and passes under Islington and Maida Hill through two long tunnels.

At Tring, it reaches its highest point. Here there are reservoirs which feed the canal with water. Then, at Wolverton, it crosses over the River Ouse by means of an iron trough aqueduct.

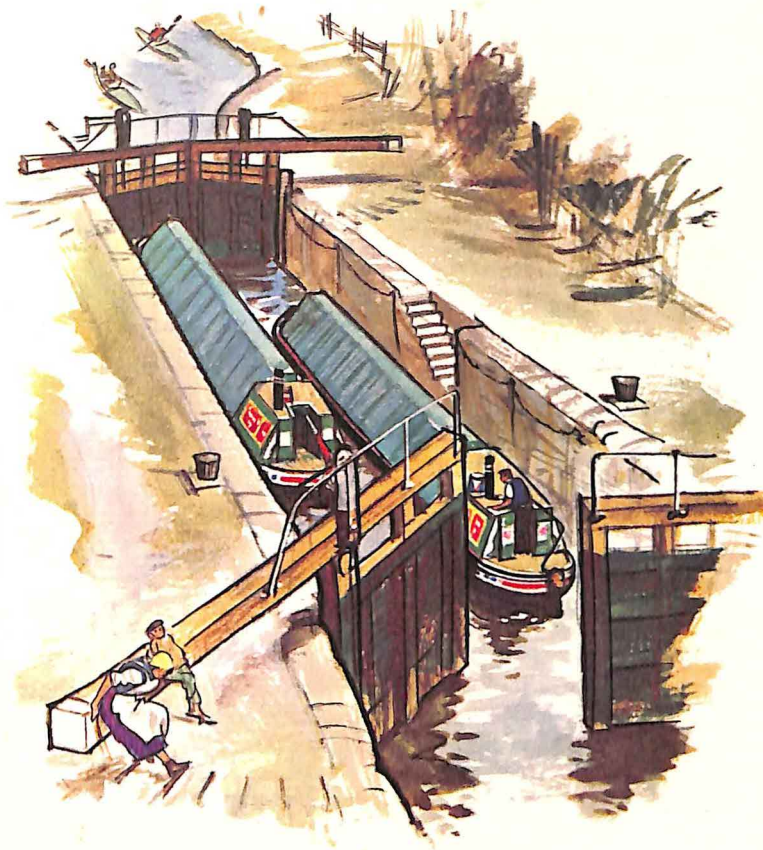


In the old horse-days, men called “leggers” used to push the boats through the tunnels. The horse would walk over the top of the hill and wait for the boat at the other end of the tunnel.

The boatmen still live on the boat with their families. They live a wandering, gypsy life. Few of them can read or write. They never had a chance to go to school.

Today, a few of their children live in hostels and go to school from there. Others visit schools near the canal banks and are given lessons to learn on the boats.

On the canal, Father steers the motor-boat and works the motor. Mother steers the "butty". The children help to work the sluices and the lock-gates.





Many people nowadays spend their holidays on the canals. Some hire 2, 4 or 6-berth cruisers. Others travel on British Waterways Day-Cruisers, which seat 60 people.

THINGS TO DO

1. Look at the pictures on pages 9 and 10. Now draw three pictures showing how a canal-boat goes *down* a step through a lock.
2. Write about "My Life" on the Narrow-Boats, by a boatman.

THINGS TO FIND OUT

1. It takes nearly five days to travel between London and Birmingham by canal-boat. Find out how long the same journey takes by rail.
2. You can obtain a canal map from British Waterways. Find out how you could travel by canal from London to York. Write down a list of the places you would pass through.
3. On a map of the world find the Suez Canal, the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Panama Canal. Find out:
 - how long is each canal
 - how many locks has it
 - what kind of ships sails through it
 - why each canal was built.

© Kenneth Nuttall 1964
First published 1964

SERVICES WE USE

by Kenneth Nuttall

ILLUSTRATED BY W. G. MORDEN

- 1 Letters by Post
- 2 Coal for the Fire
- 3 Water from the Tap
- 4 Savings from Waste
- 5 Gas for Cooking
- 6 Waterways on Land
- 7 Road Accident
- 8 News for All

LONGMANS GREEN & CO LTD

48 Grosvenor Street, London W1